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October 17, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D.
Director and Chief Medical Officer

 Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: PUBLIC REPORTING OF HOSPITAL ACQUIRED INFECTIONS

On May 21, 2005, the Board approved a motion by Supervisor Antonovich directing the Department to report back to the Board with a comprehensive plan developed in cooperation with private hospitals to begin making public the rate of hospital infections by hospital, outbreak information by hospital, and a plan to implement surprise random inspections to ensure compliance. This is an update to the most recent status report made on August 25, 2005.

State Senate Bill SB739 (Hospitals: infection control, Speier), which would have required certain hospital acquired infections to be publicly reported, was not passed out of the Legislature in 2005, but may be considered in 2006. On September 20, 2005, the Board adopted a motion by Supervisor Antonovich, supporting SB739. The Department will continue to work with the County's legislative advocates on this bill.

Staff from Public Health met with representatives of the Hospital Association of Southern California (HASC) in August and will meet again with HASC in October. HASC will form a Hospital-Acquired Infection (HAI) Task Force to work in collaboration with Public Health to assist hospitals in reducing HAIs. In addition to analyzing and recommending best practices to reduce HAIs, the Task Force will also explore issues concerning public reporting of HAIs and ways of reducing public concerns about the incidence of serious HAIs. Input will be sought from other counties, states, and national associations.

Staff from Public Health are members of the California Department of Health Services statewide working group on reducing healthcare-associated infections. This group has met twice since our

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last report and the topics covered in the meetings include resources, the role of public health in HAIs, influenza, surgical site infections, pneumonia, bloodstream infections, antimicrobial resistance, and reporting. The position of the Department – that hospital infections should be publicly reported – has been represented at the meetings. A final report from the state working group should be issued by December 31, 2005.

Staff from Public Health attend infection control committee meetings at the hospitals run by the Department. The Hospital Outreach Unit in Acute Communicable Disease Control continues to collaborate and improve communications with all hospitals in Los Angeles County.

We will provide further updates concerning our progress on public reporting of HAIs as changes occur. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

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c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors